



F-35 Lightning II Program

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MARINE CORPS WELCOMES FIRST F-35B AIRCRAFT TO ITS FLEET

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. - The Marine Corps welcomed its first F-35B aircraft, the Marine Corps variant of the F-35 Lightning II, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Jan. 11.

The F-35B, one of three variants of the Joint Strike Fighter, is a tactical fixed-wing aircraft that is to be the replacement for aging jets within the Marine Corps. 2d Marine Aircraft Wing's F-35 training squadron, Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501, is based at Eglin AFB and is the first Marine Corps squadron to receive F-35B aircraft.

Marine test pilot Maj. Joseph T. Bachmann delivered the first aircraft to Eglin AFB at 3:13 p.m. CST. A second F-35B is scheduled to be delivered later Jan. 11. The aircraft will be used for pilot and maintainer training at the F-35 Integrated Training Center.



The Marine Corps welcomed its first F-35B aircraft, the Marine Corps variant of the F-35 Lightning II, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Jan. 11.

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"The Marine Corps has to be ready to fight across the spectrum of war; a force that is most ready when the nation is least ready. The F-35B gives us the capability to do just that," said Maj. Gen. Jon M. Davis, commanding general of 2nd MAW.

The F-35B, a short takeoff and vertical landing fighter, is slated to replace the Marine Corps' F/A-18 Hornet, AV-8B Harrier and EA-6B Prowler. It will provide multi-role, fifth-generation capabilities in the form of one common tactical fixed-wing aircraft, reducing maintenance costs while ensuring the Marine Corps maintains the tactical aircraft dominance required to deter potential adversaries and protect the nation's interests.

The F-35B supports the Marine Corps' tactical and operational needs for close air support in austere conditions and locations that may be inaccessible to traditional fighters. Thanks to its short takeoff and vertical landing capabilities, the F-35B can operate from expeditionary airfields in remote, non-permissive environments with shorter runways, contributing to the Marine Corps' role as the nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness.

"The STOVL capability of the F-35B will enable us to deploy with the Marine Air-Ground Task Force and ensure these fifth-generation capabilities are available when needed," said Lt. Col. James B. Wellons, commanding officer of VMFAT-501. "Our mission is to conduct F-35B operations in coordination with our joint and coalition partners at Eglin Air Force Base in order to attain our annual pilot training requirement."

The F-35B surpassed 250 vertical landings this year, including 72 vertical landings and short takeoffs on the USS Wasp in October.